THE CAPTIVE SEA
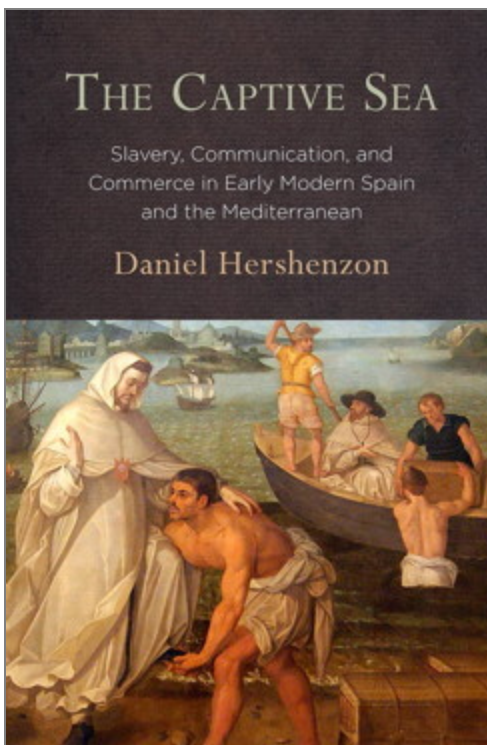
Slavery, Communication, and
Commerce in Early Modern Spain
and the Mediterranean

Daniel Hershenzon

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The Captive Sea explores the entangled histories of Muslim and Christian captives—and, by extension, of the Spanish Empire, Ottoman Algiers, and Morocco—in the seventeenth-century to argue that piracy, captivity, and redemption helped shape the Mediterranean as an integrated region at the social, political, and economic levels.

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2018 | 304 pages | Cloth $55.00

History

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A Note on the Text

Excerpt [uncorrected, not for citation]

Introduction

In 1608, Genoese naval forces took a thirteen-year-old Algerian girl named Fatima captive and sold her into slavery in Livorno, Italy. Her father almost succeeded in ransoming her that same year, but the ship that would have returned her to Algiers stopped in Corsica, where Fatima was forcibly converted and baptized as "Madalena." In an unrelated incident, also in 1608, Algerian pirates captured Diego de Pacheco, illegitimate son of the Spanish Marquis de Villena, and enslaved him in Algiers. While a captive, Pacheco was taken to Istanbul where, after attempting and failing to arrange his ransom, he converted to Islam. Piecing together these Mediterranean episodes from the archives leads to a third story beginning just a year after the capture of Fatima and Pacheco. In 1609, three Spanish Trinitarian friars were on the brink of departing for Spain with Christians they had redeemed from the Maghrib when the Algerian Governing Council detained them. All three friars and many of the captives they had redeemed would die in captivity. Meanwhile in 1613, the Sicilian squadron of Spain captured Muhammad Bey, a high-ranking Ottoman official from Alexandria. Negotiations over his ransom failed, and Muhammad died in his prison cell in Sicily.

At first glance, though they all occurred within a five-year period and in the same geographic area, these stories do not seem to have much to do with one another. Yet these different Mediterranean trajectories intersected and had strong effects on one another, whether through their ransom negotiations, for example, or in that one captive was taken as revenge for the imprisonment of another. These episodes overlap not only in how each individual was situated in relation to the other by captors and redeemers but also in the way that information about each case was transmitted across the sea. Because captives frequently contacted their kin, who in turn contacted pasha, king, and sultan, who then exchanged messages with one another, these cases had the potential to intersect in Spanish, Moroccan, or Ottoman political hubs as well as in the slave prisons. Such negotiations often led ecclesiastical redemption institutions and North African merchants to establish uneasy ransom coalitions. This was the case of the opening four episodes. Fatima's father set in motion the connections between the stories when he demanded the Algerian Governing Council secure her return. Algiers retained the Trinitarians and the captives they had ransomed as a riposte to Fatima's unsuccessful ransom and forced conversion. The friars tried to repatriate Fatima in return for their own liberty but failed. Subsequently they sought their freedom in exchange for the return of the bey, but Pacheco's father was also using all his influence in Madrid to get permission to exchange the bey for his son. This book is about the Mediterranean world that Fatima, Pacheco, the Trinitarians, and the bey inhabited, a world that captivity, commerce, and communication created.

* * *

In the early modern western Mediterranean, a wide range of individuals, networks, and institutions dealt with the trafficking of people—capturing, enslaving, smuggling, and ransoming—across and beyond the borders of Spain's Mediterranean territories, Morocco, and Ottoman Algiers and Tunis. According to a recent estimation, between 1450 and 1850 at least three million people—Muslims and Christians—lost their liberty at sea or on land and were enslaved. More than a million Christians were enslaved in the Maghrib (northwest Africa) between 1530 and 1780, and a million or more Muslims were enslaved on the inner sea's northern shores. Records do not always clearly distinguish between Muslims from the Maghrib, from the Mashriq (Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and Syria), or from Anatolia, but as these calculations exclude the Spanish Balearic and Canary Islands, Sardinia, and France, the number of Maghribis enslaved in southern Europe must have been even higher. Of this number, few managed to obtain release through compensation, swap, or flight. The majority never knew freedom again and became an integral part of the society of their captors. The widespread practice of captive-taking meant, then, that the sight of laboring captives and the recounting of stories about individuals who had lost their liberty to corsairs were common on the southern and northern shores of the early modern Mediterranean.

Piracy has always been endemic in the Mediterranean, but its increase at the turn of the seventeenth century marked the end of the age of large imperial clashes at the high seas. During the preceding century, the Ottoman and Spanish empires reigned in the Mediterranean, gripping the region after the

conquest of Constantinople-turned-Istanbul in 1453 and Muslim Granada in 1492. Imperial competition reached an equilibrium of sorts with Ottoman control established in the Balkans, Syria (1516), Egypt (1517), and the Maghrib (1530-1570s), excluding Morocco, and the Spanish controlling Portugal, Naples, Sicily, Milan, Sardinia, and a number of garrison towns along the Atlantic and Mediterranean North African littoral. During the sixteenth century, Christian coalitions clashed with the Ottomans in a series of spectacular battles, but in 1581 the empires signed a truce and turned their attention away from the sea, the Ottomans toward Safavid Persia and the Spaniards toward northern Europe and the Atlantic world. To be sure, imperial structures and logics continued to shape life in the Mediterranean, but the sea was transformed from an offensive into a defensive frontier. This moment ushered in a new age of privateering—*corso* (Spanish, Italian) or *course* (French), as the peoples of the Mediterranean called it. Christian and Muslim corsairs and freebooters stepped in to fill the vacuum imperial forces had left in the western half of the sea. Maghribi corsairs raided southern European shores—they even reached as far as Ireland and Iceland in the 1620s and 1630s—and attacked Christian ships on the high seas. Christian corsairs, pirates, soldiers, and royal fleets raided Maghribi cities and ships and captured and enslaved Moroccan and Ottoman subjects.

Unlike black slaves in the Atlantic world, the victims of the Mediterranean system of bondage knew their captors, not personally but rather on the basis of *longue durée* violent and peaceful exchanges. Moreover, the distances separating southern Andalusia from Morocco (less than nine miles), the Spanish Levant from Ottoman Algiers (about 200 miles), or Sicily from Ottoman Tunis (around 110 miles) were short. Algiers was closer to Majorca than was Madrid, and Majorca was closer to Algiers than was Istanbul. This proximity meant that throughout the medieval and early modern periods intense social, economic, and political interactions prevailed alongside violence, captive-taking, and enslavement. Geography and history meant that this bondage system articulated alienation, or the condition of foreignness, differently than the bondage system in the Atlantic or sub-Saharan world. Unlike black slaves in Africa, the Atlantic world, and Iberia, Mediterranean slaves generally maintained some contact, in the form of letters, with their kinfolk and communities. In North African cities, priests and friars provided religious services for captives in prison churches. Muslims enslaved in Italy had mosques as early as the mid-seventeenth century, and even in Catholic Spain, Muslim slaves had private worship spaces during the seventeenth century. At the turn of the eighteenth century the Spanish king ordered the allocation of burial space to Muslims in any city where Muslim slaves resided.

In the Mediterranean, captivity and slavery were not exclusive conditions but rather dimensions of a single process. Contemporaries used the terms "captive" and "slave" interchangeably to refer to the system's victims. As "captives," slaves retained claims on kin living across the sea. In fact, masters interested in ransom money encouraged their slaves to write home. Ransoming might occur in various ways: the Trinitarian and Mercedarian orders and urban fraternities ransomed Christian captives; Muslim and Christian captives commissioned merchants to ransom them and transfer them home; Muslim and Christian rulers often negotiated the exchange of their subjects; and kin negotiated

the exchange of their enslaved relatives. Even slaves with no prospect of paying ransom could send letters to kin and home authorities and receive correspondence in return. Captivity and enslavement were undoubtedly among the worst experiences of the early modern Mediterranean; numerous texts recount the hellish living conditions captives-turned-authors suffered. Yet the mechanisms of captivity, enslavement, and ransom prevented the full alienation or social isolation of enslaved captives in the Mediterranean. Geography and the intensity of exchange in the region left Mediterranean slaves comparatively better-off than their counterparts in other places. This was the world of Diego de Pacheco, Fatima, the Trinitarians, and the old bey.

* * *

This book argues that piracy, captivity, and redemption shaped the western Mediterranean as an integrated region socially, politically, and economically. It explores the entangled experiences of Muslim and Christian captives and by extension the entangled histories of the Spanish Empire, Morocco, and Ottoman Algiers in the seventeenth century. Adopting a sociocultural perspective and drawing on the history of commerce, the book demonstrates that a Mediterranean system of bondage entwined the lives of Muslim and Christian captives in spite of confessional differences. They were connected by a political economy of ransom, the result of the intermingling of the market, social obligation, religion, and politics. Actors from across the sea—captives, merchants, friars, and rulers— shaped this political economy and interacted through an array of texts that captives created and distributed across the sea. Constant circulation of texts and people meant that the lives of Fatima, the Trinitarians, Pacheco, Muhammad, and others, which historians have so far studied in isolation, were interdependent. The history that emerges from their stories is both local and regional; it is a history *in* the Mediterranean and a history *of* the Mediterranean. The book offers an analysis of competing Spanish, Algerian, and Moroccan projects intended to shape Mediterranean mobility structures. Simultaneously, it reveals the tragic upending of the lives of individuals by these imperial maritime political agendas and also how Christian, Muslim, and Jewish merchants subverted such plans.

Scholars often write the history of the early modern Mediterranean as either a story of religious enmity or a tale of canny merchants and thriving markets. These are sometimes mutually exclusive approaches, but in the context of the western half of the sea they can also operate as complementary elements arranged along a temporal axis. Historians imagine the sixteenth-century western Mediterranean as a world sharply divided along confessional lines. In *The Forgotten Frontier*, historian Andrew Hess described the Ibero-African frontier not only as hostile but also as an empty region. Even Fernand Braudel, whose work Hess was criticizing, and who famously and poetically claimed that the "Turkish Mediterranean lived and breathed with the same rhythms as the Christian, [and] that the whole sea shared a common destiny," stressed religious oppositions and the division of the sea into two blocs, Ottoman Muslim and Spanish Christian. The transformation of the western Mediterranean into a religiously and imperially divided maritime space was the result of events and processes internal and external to the sea; the shift was slow and occurred over more than a century.

It allegedly began with the Christian conquest of Muslim Granada (1492) and ended with the expulsion (1609-1614) of the Moriscos (Spain's forcefully converted Muslims and their descendants). At the turn of the seventeenth century, these events were complemented by the "northern invasion," when English, Dutch, and French merchants and fleets invaded the Mediterranean en masse, transforming it into an internationalized arena where homogeneous nation-states competed in the market. This was supposedly the time when Christians and Muslims living around the sea had lost their shared world. According to this narrative, an international setting replaced an imperial world, foreigners substituted for local actors, and an impersonal market supplanted archaic religious violence. In short, after the northern invasion, Europeans modernized the sea, a process that completed the region's disintegration or the sea's "death." The common rhythms that according to Braudel had orchestrated the lives of the sixteenth-century Muslim and Christian Mediterraneans were replaced by polyphony in the seventeenth century, and the confessional "shared destiny" shattered into various national destinies. Faruk Tabak has succinctly summarized the shift thus: "In historical studies that investigate the waning of the Mediterranean, the ecumenical setting of the golden age of the basin fades into the background, only to be supplanted by differential and singular settings from the seventeenth century."

The history of piracy and captivity is no exception to these historiographical framings. Studies of captivity in the Mediterranean, a theme that has recently drawn much scholarly attention, follow that trend. Rather than account for how Mediterranean ransom actors interacted and intersected, they focus either on urban and royal-ecclesiastical ransom institutions or, more recently, on small-scale ransom networks. An institutional perspective that is concerned solely with the Trinitarian and Mercedarian orders of redemption favors the nation ("Spain") and religion ("Catholicism") as its units of analysis and fails to account for the ways in which pressures from both Maghribi political actors and merchants who ransomed captives continually influenced Spanish ransom agendas. This approach results in histories of Spanish, French, or Algerian captivity instead of a connected regional history of Mediterranean slavery. When scholars focus on ransom intermediaries, the Mediterranean reemerges as a space defined by commercial exchange. They describe the redemption of captives as part of an "economy of ransom" that regulated religious violence and rationalized commerce with Muslims as a means of freeing captives. This approach sheds new light on the related issues of transaction costs, credit mechanisms, and insurance and rightly avoids reading captivity and ransom in terms of a transhistorical clash between Islam and Christendom. However, in the context of the western Mediterranean this corrective emphasis risks divorcing ransom institutions and individual ransomers, which constantly interacted, and obscures the continuous importance of religion, political dynamics, and social obligation in shaping the market.

* * *

This book seeks to go beyond both the northern invasion thesis and Hess's portrayal of the Mediterranean as a sterile, segregated space. It avoids the bifurcated approach that contrasts market exchange and religion by treating the Mediterranean as both a perspective and an object of study, employing a lens that makes visible not only social relations otherwise unnoticed but also a transimperial process of *region formation*. Region formation includes the ways in which movement, practices, and relations became more intense across the sea, creating a regional unity in spite of political and religious rivalries that shaped the imaginaries of the peoples living in that region and that continue to shape much contemporary historiography. Mediterranean region formation was the result of contacts between cross-boundary maritime practices and political attempts to limit and shape mobility across the sea. The process was uneven, and integration was unequally distributed across the western Mediterranean, being exceptional in its intensity and particularly noticeable in three "Mediterranean corridors," to borrow Julia Clancy-Smith's term. The eastern corridor ran roughly from the coastline of Ottoman Tunis to Spanish Sicily and Malta; the central corridor stretched between Ottoman Algiers, Spanish Oran, the Balearic Islands, and Catalonia; and the western one linked Christian and Muslim cities in Atlantic and Mediterranean Morocco with southern Andalusia and Sanlúcar de Barrameda in Atlantic Spain. I examine the process that made the sea palpable for the people living around its shores by reconstructing interactions and links across captives and kin, ecclesiastic ransom institutions, Jewish, Muslim, and Christian merchants, and Spanish, Algerian, and Moroccan rulers.

There are two reasons to focus on the interactions of various polities and nonpolitical actors rather than examine the Mediterranean designs of a single polity alone. First, region formation processes were never the result of a single cause. Even when rulers promoted regional projects, they were not alone on the stage, and their plans had to be adjusted to, and were even transformed by, the interests of other political actors as well as the meddling of commercial and social networks. Moreover, the states these Mediterranean rulers governed were not coherent organizations with clearly articulated and unified Mediterranean agendas. In the intertwined cases of Fatima, Diego, the three Trinitarians, and the bey, for example, two interest groups, each of which included Spaniards and Algerians or Muslims and Christians, envisioned opposing solutions to meet the conflicting needs of powerful forces on each side (Chapter 7). The first group included the Trinitarians, Ottoman sultan, Algerian pasha, and Spanish king, all of whom were interested in restarting the commerce of captives to the degree they cared less about Fatima's repatriation. The second group included members of the Janissary militia of Algiers, Christian converts to Islam, who refused to open the ransom market unless Fatima was freed and allowed to return home. Against the idea that by the end of the sixteenth century the market and nations had replaced religion and social obligation in the Mediterranean, this book shows how religion, imperial politics, and social mechanisms shaped the market into the next century too. By reconstructing the webs that linked captives, captors, masters, kin, and rulers, we can see the political economy of ransom and the processes by which these actors sought to mold it, as well as the intense communication across the sea their actions engendered. Circulation and

exchange are important for the light they shed on captivity and ransom, but they are even more significant as indicators of region formation, or integration. These multiple cross-maritime interactions do more than counter an image of a declining seventeenth-century Mediterranean dissolving into nation-states. They force us to rethink early modern Europe and its others and to question how transimperial maritime networks shaped Europe's seemingly bounded territorial identities.

The system this book reconstructs took shape in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. The Ottoman-Spanish truce of 1581 coincided with the northern invasion and marked the loss of the Mediterranean's economic supremacy over northern Europe and the Atlantic world. The book shows how these events transformed the ways in which the sea connected Morocco, the Ottoman Maghrib, and Spain and changed how those who lived alongside the Mediterranean imagined the sea. When corsairs took the place of imperial fleets, the number of captives increased and the patterns of their circulation across time and space changed. In earlier periods, dramatic maritime battles like Lepanto (1571) had seen thousands of captives lose their liberty, but some had regained it quickly, often within a few short hours, while many captives had changed hands in the cease-fire and peace treaties that followed such large-scale and violent encounters. After 1581, seldom did more than a few hundred soldiers or sailors aboard ship lose or regain their liberty within such short intervals. Most incidents involved the seizure, by corsairs, of small numbers of captives—a few fishermen or peasants, or dozens of travelers. In other words, piracy transformed the circulation of captives across the imperial map, producing a longer-lasting and more stable population of captives than had large-scale naval battles before 1581.

The Captive Sea argues that these geopolitical and demographic changes had unexpected and significant consequences. They enhanced the importance of ransom networks, which Maghribi Jewish and Muslim merchants and Iberian Christian merchants had formed, while reinforcing the institutionalization of the Mercedarians and the Trinitarians, religious orders charged with redeeming Christians. Competition and collaboration between religious orders and merchants created an infrastructure that channeled the return home of captives. The weekly arrival of Christian and Muslim captives into port cities also revolutionized the production and transmission of information. Captives—captured, ransomed, and runaway—generated and distributed news in oral interrogations and any number of written modes: requests for help, letters to their kin, urban topographies describing places of imprisonment, intelligence reports, diaries, and letters of recommendation they wrote for other Christian captives who had converted to Islam and desired to return to Christianity but feared the Inquisition (Chapters 4-6). In this sense, this book claims that Mediterranean slavery was both a forced-labor system and a communication system.

Writing was central to the experience of captivity and powerfully mediated captives' social relations. The book draws on a vast and dispersed textual and visual production in the published and archival sources composed by Christians, Muslims, and Jews from Spain, Morocco, Ottoman Algiers, Italy, and France. In addition to narratives penned by freed captives, Inquisitorial sources, Trinitarian and

Mercedarian records, pamphlets, maps, and plays, the book makes ample use of records that captives composed during their captivity, such as letters, requests, and intelligence reports. Literary and historical accounts of captivity often read captivity narratives in terms of testimony and representation, but this book also analyzes these rich captivity-related archives as a social practice central to the experience of captivity. Put differently, in addition to reconstructing the reality such texts represent, the book asks what captives, captors, and redeemers did by writing and what the local and regional effects of the production and circulation of such texts were. Read this way, previously identified and newly uncovered sources shed novel light on Mediterranean bondage in terms of labor but also in terms of its functioning as a communication system.

The intensive circulation of people and information reshaped and entangled communities around the Mediterranean, extending their boundaries across the sea. Captivity brutally ruptured lives but simultaneously helped make the Mediterranean into an economic, social, and political space. Captivity forced Maghribi women to negotiate the exchange of their sons and husbands with their Christian counterparts; it allowed captives to maintain kinship ties at home; it facilitated the entry of Maghribi Jews and Muslims into Spain, from which they had been expelled only a few generations previously; and thanks to paper and information flows, it permitted Spanish and Maghribi religious and political institutions to gain knowledge of enemy territory before the peace negotiations of the eighteenth century. Piracy, captivity, and ransom allowed Mediterranean people to learn much about their neighbor-enemies across the sea. Ironically, the redemption of captives, a form of mobility geared toward separating Christians from Muslims, extended the social and religious boundaries of coastal communities and port cities in Spain and North Africa and created new links between them.

The captivity of Muslims and the captivity of Christians formed interdependent elements in a single Mediterranean system, but those elements were not identical. The system was asymmetrical. While ecclesiastic institutions redeemed Portuguese, Spanish, French, and Italian captives and urban fraternities redeemed Italians, during the first two-thirds of the seventeenth-century Maroccan and later Algerian rulers ransomed their subjects unsystematically and their enslaved subjects had to rely mostly on their kin. Only in the last third of the seventeenth century did Maghribi rulers begin rescuing their subjects on a regular basis. The absence of comparable institutions on the Muslim side meant that the system offered Christians and Muslims uneven chances of regaining their liberty.

The asymmetry is significantly more acute in the production and archiving of records that documented the trafficking and ransom of captives. In Spain, from the 1570s the orders of redemption systematically recorded their missions, thus establishing serial documentary corpora that contain names of ransomed captives, ransom prices, and detailed descriptions of ransom negotiations; the Council of State collected information about political events in the Maghrib; the Council of War methodically archived petitions for help that captives and their kin submitted to the crown, or copies or summaries of such petitions; parochial churches collected information about captives who had died or converted; and the Inquisition carefully kept transcripts of trials of renegades and sent detailed

summaries to Madrid. In addition, a few former captives wrote learned treatises on the Maghrib and memoirs recounting their experiences. While there are no archival sections that contain captivity-related documents exclusively, captives and captivity narratives lie hidden throughout Spain's state archives, local archives, and manuscript collections.

Similar corpora for seventeenth-century North Africa do not appear to exist. Such records may have been produced in smaller quantities; perhaps they were not archived or have been destroyed—or perhaps they await discovery and study. Moroccan archives offer only limited information on piracy, captivity, and ransom in the seventeenth century. In Tunis the oldest register in the National Archives to have survived the Algerian sacking of the city in 1756 is the fiscal register, and the earliest records in this register—documenting the relations between the bey and the local population—date back only to 1676. Thus, like the Moroccan archives, the Tunisian archives offer limited information on the seventeenth-century Mediterranean. Algiers may be an exception, as the pioneering work of Fatiha Loualich on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century social history suggests. While Loualich's work focuses mostly on sub-Saharan slavery in the city, she references archival sources that discuss corsairs, Christian captives, and the ways in which such captives were assimilated into the social fabric of the city. Despite these important studies, there is little scholarly production on captivity and redemption in the early modern western Mediterranean based exclusively or primarily on Moroccan or Ottoman archival sources. The establishment of repositories containing documents from the Muslim western Mediterranean would make it possible to create a more complete history of captivity and ransom and of the sea in the early modern period. For now at least, the study of Mediterranean captivity must rely on European archives, which, fortunately for the historian, hold numerous records written by Christians, Maghribi Muslims, and Jews.

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Our protagonists resist our desire for neat categorization, the academic's urge to label, as they constantly crossed political, religious, and geographical boundaries and subvert expectations of their fields of expertise and action. Thus, across seven chapters, *The Captive Sea* applies an integrative approach to the history of captivity, exploring it from various geopolitical scales and value regimes. The first three chapters introduce the main actors of this history: captives, redeeming friars, ransoming merchants, and Mediterranean rulers—Spanish kings, Moroccan sultans and governors, and Algerian pashas. Chapter 1, "The Social Life of Enslaved Captives," offers a broad comparative analysis of the slavery experiences of Muslims and Christians across the western Mediterranean. It examines the lives of captives, including capture, through social networks, occupations, informal economies, and religious conversion, along with modes of slave ownership. The chapter argues that the movement of Muslim and Christian slaves between masters and occupations by means of various forms of temporary and permanent exchange resulted in spatial and occupational mobility both in cities and across the sea and shaped the bondage of Muslims and of Christians as part of a single Mediterranean system.

The next two chapters examine what captives had to do in order to obtain their liberty and the individuals and institutions that helped captives return home. Chapter 2, "Ransom: Between Economic, Political, and Salvific Interests," focuses on ransomers: Trinitarian and Mercedarian friars as well as merchants. The chapter demonstrates the linkage of ransom to religion and to commerce between Europe and North Africa. Friars ransomed captives as a way of redeeming souls in danger of conversion to Islam, but in the process they exported bullion and goods to the Muslim Maghrib. Shrewd merchants could legitimize otherwise illegal trade with Muslims by ransoming captives. The chapter argues that ransom formed a locus of struggles between redeeming friars, ransoming merchants, and critics of conjoined trade with Islam and redemption, who advocated war instead. These three groups sought to manage interactions with Islam according to their respective visions— religious, economic, and political. Finally, the chapter shows the role Maghribi rulers played in shaping Spanish ransom procedures.

Chapter 3, "Negotiating Ransom, Seeking Redemption," turns to captives' experiences of engineering their return home and argues that they took an active part in planning ransom procedures. Coaxed by masters, captives contacted relatives, provided them with information about their place of captivity, urged their kin to collect money or exchange them for other slaves, and contracted middlemen or sought help from church institutions to execute their ransom or swapping. Risk accompanied every stage of ransoming, from planning to negotiation to execution. Captives, masters, and rescuers had to rely on exchange enclaves and the intervention of legal, religious, and political bureaucracies to complete the exchange successfully.

Chapters 4-6 advance our understanding of the production and circulation of information in the early modern Mediterranean as well as their social and political effects. They show (1) how central writing was to the experience of captivity, for literate and illiterate captives alike; (2) how captives became instrumental in the production of all sorts of information about current affairs in hostile territories; and (3) how, in addition to being mobile in cities and among cities in an imperially inscribed zone (Morocco and the Hispanic and Ottoman empires), captives made other geographical crossings—when captured and upon their return. All these factors ensured that captives not only actively produced news but also acted as major agents in the circulation of information. These chapters argue that the letters captives composed to advance their freedom created an infrastructure for the diffusion of social, political, and religious information linking people, communities, and institutions around and across the Mediterranean. Locally, such writing and communication operated as a survival strategy, allowing captives to improve their living conditions. At the Mediterranean level, this sharing of information extended the reach of institutions such as the Inquisition, the family, and political bureaucracies beyond territorial boundaries, thereby connecting the Spanish Empire, Morocco, and the North African Ottoman regencies.

Chapter 4, "Taking Captives, Capturing Communities," follows captives' letters to kin, friends, and church. It argues that captivity extended communal boundaries across the sea as captives were put in charge of channeling information about community members who had died, converted as captives, or suffered martyrdom. Their actions were crucial, allowing "chained widows" to remarry, bereaved kin to mourn the dead, and the church to exclude and excommunicate members who had converted or to canonize martyrs.

Chapter 5, "Confronting Threats, Countering Violence," examines how Christians and Muslims narrated violence exerted upon slaves. It argues that instances of aggression such as forced conversions, desecration of bodies, and executions, which other scholars have considered irrational and arbitrary, in fact reflected a system of reciprocity that operated on a Mediterranean scale. What had started as a local event, initiated by individual slave owners, quickly grew to involve people and institutions ranging from family members to North African political authorities to Spanish religious orders and political authorities.

Chapter 6, "Moving Captives, Moving Information," examines the role captives played in collecting, writing, and transmitting political information about the Maghrib to Spanish decision makers. It argues that by the turn of the seventeenth century—a time when the market for printed accounts of Mediterranean experiences is conventionally thought to have waned—Spanish politicians came to rely almost exclusively on captives and ransomers for information about Algerian plans to attack Spain or the arrival of merchant ships from plague-ridden Maghribi cities. This information circulated intensely in manuscript and also in print.

Chapter 7, "The Political Economy of Ransom," takes a closer look at the tightly connected failed attempts to ransom Fatima, Diego de Pacheco, the Trinitarians, and Muhammad Bey, whose stories began this introduction. This zooming-in highlights social and political tensions within and between the Spanish and Ottoman empires. By analyzing ransom as a transimperial political economy, the chapter shows how state centralization in Spain, partly articulated in relation to the practice of ransom, depended upon the outsourcing of power, not only to imperial units (local agents, historical territories, or cities) but also to former subjects previously expelled (Jews and Muslims) who were now residents of enemy territories (Algiers and Morocco). The chapter demonstrates how in the process Spain's paradigmatic religious others, Maghribi Jews and Muslims, against whom the monarchy defined its Catholicism, became instrumental for the redemption of Christian souls. The chapter illustrates the dynamism that characterized the Mediterranean bondage system and examines how the system's transformation at the end of the sixteenth century resulted in a new mode of region formation and in denser interactions and thicker links connecting the southern and northern shores of the sea.

In the early modern period, the western half of the Mediterranean was a hostile region but not an empty space. Ordinary Christians and Muslims, as well as political, religious, and social institutions, constantly made and unmade the links that intertwined Spain, Ottoman Algiers, and Morocco. Captors

and captives, petty merchants and friars, and humble relatives interacted with one another, coaxed rulers to help in ways that required them to dialogue with their counterparts, and pressured rulers to avoid action, when inaction seemed to be safer for their enslaved kin. Intensive interactions meant that in the seventeenth century the people populating the lands encircled by the sea knew more about their neighbors on the opposite side, and received news about them more frequently, than people living in the region a century earlier. Fear of captivity and hate of pirates must have been a constant; however, they also turned the sea for Spaniards, Algerians, and Moroccans into a palpable scale, linking the local and the regional.

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